

Employee FRONTLINE

A newsletter from the WA State Employee Assistance Program

Be an Active Listener

Active listening is a learned skill that elevates and makes communication more valuable and effective. When you actively listen, you're engaged, taking turns confirming what you've heard, restating the key points, and demonstrating interest in the most important communication goal — understanding and agreeing on what is being communicated. When you are actively listening, you are less prone to distraction. You validate the speaker, and you get the details and instructions "right" the first time. With practice, active listening becomes second nature and adds to your value as an employee. Professional counselors are taught active listening because it's powerful and helps clients or patients feel heard and hopeful. You can start practicing active listening today. You'll discover the hidden benefits of effective communication at work, improve your relationships, and may feel more engaged with your job.



How to Demonstrate Leadership

Is a leadership position in your future? There are plenty of ways to demonstrate leadership potential at work. Critical leadership skills include being proactive at thinking ahead to prevent problems on the job, being decisive even when faced with uncertainty, offering assistance to others, being an active listener, modeling a good work-life balance, working from a "service-oriented" perspective, leading by example, being willing to take sensible risks, showing self-awareness, and accepting feedback like a pro. Strong leadership skills aren't just about delegating and setting directions. They're about personal competency. Practice these behaviors and others will take notice.



Marijuana Research: What Should I Believe?



Can getting high on marijuana place you at risk for a stroke? New Zealand researchers reviewed urine samples taken from 160 stroke sufferers between the ages of 18 and 55 and discovered that patients

were more than twice as likely to have marijuana present in their system. Plenty of research has produced evidence pointing to the negative health and psychosocial effects of marijuana use. The American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM, an association of medical experts) maintains a strict, research-driven, no-use, no-legalization policy.

Although pro-use marijuana organizations target anti-use research in favor of research they believe supports their pro-use position, ASAM's policy positions offer consumers and parents a convincing read. Given the risks, educate yourself and others. The best medical arguments and research summaries can be found at ASAM.org, DrugFacts: Marijuana, and Medical Marijuana & the Mind.

Frontline Employee

Take the Stairs!

Small increments of physical exercise such as raking leaves, taking the stairs, or adding a longer walk to a building's entrance have a cumulative effect in giving your body the exercise it craves. Even two minutes count. It can all add up and equate to a gym workout. A study of more than 6,000 American adults showed that an active lifestyle approach, as opposed to structured exercise, may be just as beneficial in improving health outcomes, including preventing metabolic syndrome, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol. The secret is making movement a way of life. Source: [Taking Stairs, Raking Leaves May Equal Trip to Gym](#)



Millennial Stress and Strain



Millennial adults aged 18-33 are the most stressed among age groups, and their biggest concerns are work and money issues. An online survey conducted last year by Harris Interactive for the American Psychological Association found that Millennial adults are about 6 percent more stressed than others. Overall, that's not too bad, but Millennials are more likely to also suffer from anxiety or depression. Fifty-two percent report losing sleep over work/money issues in

the past year. Not all stress is bad, but managing stress to avoid emotional strain that can lead to anxiety and depression is important. Consistently losing sleep, chronic irritability, gastrointestinal problems, headaches, and depression are a few problems that signal a need to take action. Source: [APA: Health Care System Falls Short of Stress Management](#)

Create a Cache to Change Your Mood

Start collecting a personal cache of inspiring short articles, feel-good video links, funny jokes, and spiritual messages that you can refer to when you're feeling down. This uplifting and mood-changing technique can transform downcast feelings about a bad day at work, general stress, or a disappointing incident. Normal events can flip the switch and cast a shadow on your sunny mood. The life skill is learning how to get the "positive you" back. It's easier than you think. Your personal collection of positive goodies can recapture your momentum, increase energy, and allow loved ones to enjoy your company more. Psychologists have always known about our ability to change our feeling state. Don't be a victim of unpredictable environmental influences on mood. A word of caution: if you struggle with an ongoing slump, contact the EAP, your mental health provider, or medical help. Depression is a treatable disease. Fight it if necessary so you get the happiness back.



On-boarding Yourself



If you're a new hire, consider creating a personal "on-boarding" plan for yourself.

Whether or not

your employer has a formal program to orient you to the organization, organizing yourself around a few tasks can increase your chances of discovering what's expected of you by the organization and avoiding unpleasant surprises: 1) Create a checklist of important people, especially those with authority or in leadership roles. Know who they are and what they do; 2) If miscommunication happens in the first few days or you feel overlooked, out of place, or wonder "what's next," be patient with your employer. Don't assume they aren't excited about having picked you for the position; 3) Find a mentor. Pick someone and ask if he or she would mind being available to show you the ropes. Make this your go-to person. This will prevent you from feeling disconnected and will keep your confidence level high; 4) If you find yourself alone without direction, don't assume the other staff members don't care. Instead, use this time to demonstrate initiative and plan for anticipated assignments; 5) If needed, suggest activities, tasks, field trips, or research projects to help orient you to the organization; 6) Ask your boss for regular opportunities for two-way feedback, and be gently assertive in making it happen if needed. Your No. 1 goal is knowing you're on the right track, no matter what your duties or work goals are. Following these steps will create an impression, keep you forward-looking, set the tone for your workstyle, and help ensure your success in the years ahead.